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Letter dated 1 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to urgently draw your attention and that of the other members of the Security Council to the following:

- In September 1991, on the eve of the entry into force of the ceasefire, under the supervision of the United Nations, the area east of the security structure in Moroccan Sahara was voluntarily set up by my country, in agreement with the United Nations, to exclude any civilian or military presence there, in order to reduce tensions between Morocco and Algeria and prevent the resumption of hostilities.

- At the time, the Kingdom of Morocco had agreed with the United Nations that the only presence in the area east of the security structure in Moroccan Sahara was, and would remain, that of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), in order to consolidate the ceasefire. These facts are duly recorded in the various exchanges between Morocco and the United Nations and through the interaction of my country with the members of the international community.

- The Status of Mission Agreement of MINURSO, signed between the Kingdom of Morocco and the United Nations, states explicitly, in its article 1 (b), that its provisions cover the entire "Sahara territory", thus covering areas both west and east of the security structure.

- For several months now, the other parties have been escalating their violations of the ceasefire and the military agreements in force, carrying out extremely grave acts of provocation that seriously threaten peace, stability and security in the region. These include:

  - The continued illegal presence of armed elements of "polisario" in the Guerguerat buffer zone, in flagrant violation of military agreement No. 1. This is an unacceptable defiance of the Security Council, the United Nations and its Secretary-General, António Guterres. In his statements of 25 February 2017 and 6 January 2018, as well as in his report on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2017/307), dated 10 April 2017, the Secretary-General had called for the complete maintenance of the status quo and for freedom of movement in the buffer zone of Guerguerat. In the report, he had also expressed his deep concern by the continued presence of "polisario" in the zone and had asked the Security Council to urge "polisario" to withdraw from the buffer zone in Guerguerat fully and unconditionally.

- Three days ago, "polisario" once again repeated its violations of military agreement No.1 in another area of Moroccan Sahara, namely Mahbes, where several armed elements of "polisario" turned up in military vehicles, set up tents, dug a ditch and built structures using sandbags.

– To make matters worse, "polisario" is preparing to relocate some of its administrative and military facilities from the Tindouf camps in Algeria, where they have always been since the start of the dispute in 1975, to the area east of the security structure in Moroccan Sahara, which includes the localities of Bir Lahlou and Tifariti.

– The unacceptable and illegal objective of this new and extremely serious escalation is to change the reality on the ground and to alter the status quo in Moroccan Sahara, something which Morocco will never allow. The relocation of any civilian, military, administrative or other "polisario" facility of any kind from the Tindouf camps in Algeria to the area east of the security structure in Moroccan Sahara constitutes a casus belli.

– This illegal act by the other parties seriously threatens the United Nations political process which the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy have been working tirelessly to relaunch. With their repeated violations, which have now spread to several areas east of the security structure in Moroccan Sahara, the other parties are ensuring that any chance of relaunching the political process is doomed. Indeed, the violations of the military agreements and the ceasefire and the exacerbation of tensions on the ground are antithetical to the political process which, as the Secretary-General says, absolutely needs a favourable and peaceful environment.

– The inaction of the international community and its passivity in respect of these violations have, unfortunately, been interpreted by the other parties as encouragement to persist in their defiance.

– The Kingdom of Morocco therefore urges the Security Council to demand that the other parties cease their actions, which are detrimental to peace, stability and security in the region. The Council is called upon to use its authority to force compliance with the ceasefire and military agreements and to order "polisario" to withdraw immediately, unconditionally and completely from the area east of the security structure in Moroccan Sahara.

– The Kingdom of Morocco, which has so far shown restraint and a strong sense of responsibility, at the request of the Secretary-General, his Personal Envoy and the international community, will not stand idly by while the situation on the ground deteriorates. The other parties will then have to take full responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

– The Kingdom of Morocco would like to reiterate its continued and unwavering commitment to the United Nations political process and its full readiness to continue cooperating with the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy.

I should be most grateful if you would have the present letter issued urgently as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Omar **Hilale**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative